

Pre-K Teaching Times

Listening Skills and English Language Learners

Good listening skills are essential for young children. All children need strong auditory processing skills to follow directions, understand information, or respond appropriately to their peers or adults.

Activities to Develop Listening Skills

Musical Patterns

Have children clap or use musical instruments to tap out the rhythm in songs. Or, clap a pattern for the children and ask them to imitate the pattern.

Play games with your students that encourage listening skills, such as following instructions in "Simon Says" or passing along whispered sentences verbatim in "Telephone." Play a game of "Red Rover" instructing a specific student to run and attempt to break the other team's hand-in-hand barrier upon hearing his name.

Working with English Language Learners (ELL)

How can I communicate with a child who doesn't speak English?

Use hand gestures and facial expressions to communicate; you will be surprised by how much you can convey with these alone. Just like any other young child, ELL students will also pick up on your body language, so be relaxed and confident, smile often, and give the thumbs up sign when things are going well. Speak clearly, enunciate your words, and avoid use of regional slang or colloquialisms.

Is there anything else I can do to help my ELL student(s) understand what I am saying? Provide visuals and props whenever possible to help ELL students better understand a concept.

My ESL students never talk. I don't think they're learning. What should I do? Don't worry, nothing is wrong. Most ELL students will go through a "silent period" that lasts anywhere from six weeks to three months. During this time the ELL student(s) are absorbing their new language and are often afraid of speaking and making a mistake.



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Call the BFTS office and Pre-K consultant on duty at 404-656-5957. Pre-K consultant contact information also can be found on the DECAL website. www.dec.ga.gov

Social Studies

Fire Prevention Week is usually celebrated in October, so let's use this opportunity to teach children about some important community helpers — firefighters.

Teaching children about fire safety can prevent a fire or may even help them survive one. Explain to children that firefighters help keep us safe in our neighborhoods by fighting fires, teaching fire safety, inspecting buildings, rescuing people, etc. They are brave men and women who protect us every day.

Children need to know that we can practice what to do in case of a fire at home and at school. **Fire drills** teach us what to do in case of a fire. Share classroom procedures for a fire drill. Prepare children that the **fire alarm** can be loud and frightening but if it goes off, it is important for them to be quiet and follow directions. Here are some concepts for children to learn:

- Men and women who fight fires are called firefighters.
- Firefighters wear special uniforms to protect their bodies.
- Firefighters use special equipment like fire extinguishers and hoses to fight fires.
- Firefighters have to connect the hoses to the fire hydrant.



- Remind children that they should never go back inside a burning building--under no circumstances.

Activity Time

Walk around the school and have the children look for exit signs. Keep a tally of all the exit signs found. Have children count tally marks together.

Place firefighter clothing such as boots, coats, and hats for children to wear in dramatic play. Add a bell for children to use as a fire alarm. A garden hose can be added to represent a fire hose. While children role play, listen for new vocabulary introduced and how much children have learned about this topic.

Create a language experience chart as the children generate ideas about safety. Record their ideas about safety on chart paper and include pictures. Post their ideas in the classroom so children can see.

Invite a firefighter to bring a truck to your school. This is a great way for children to observe the truck and learn more about the special features (ladders, hoses, siren, special clothing, etc.). Leave time for children to ask a few questions.

Strategies for Developing Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge has long been identified as one of the best predictors of reading comprehension (Davis, 1972; Thorndike, 1917), reading performance in general, and school achievement (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002, 2008). Because of the relationship between vocabulary, reading, and school achievement, it is critical that Pre-K focus on building vocabulary knowledge. The teacher's modeling and use of language, along with an awareness of ensuring ample opportunities for children to use language encourages growth in receptive and expressive language and thus greater gains in vocabulary development.

What steps can we take to support vocabulary development? Ensure that materials that encourage children to speak are accessible throughout the classroom such as phones, puppets, flannel boards, dramatic play materials, tape recorders with microphones, interactive books, and multi-sensory materials for exploration. The strength of these materials especially comes when adults interact with children as they engage with materials.

Create a culture of classroom conversations with all children. Talk about what children are interested in and what they wish to share with you. Extend and deepen topics by engaging in multiple back and forth exchanges with children; ask open-ended questions. Use a wide variety of vocabulary, "big words," and explain or model new words for children. Use picture cards when discussing new vocabulary, so that children can connect the word visually. Encourage children to listen to each other and teach them to talk with each other.

When reading books, pause and allow children to talk about the pictures or story events. Re-reading favorite books multiple times allows children to process vocabulary and word meaning. By ensuring that you have a variety of books to support your current topic of study, you will help reinforce new vocabulary.

Finally, raise the bar! Use sophisticated vocabulary in conversation, when reading stories, and during play. Explain the new word and connect it to something the children already understand. Choose interesting topics to study...if students are engaged and interested, they will absorb new information. Asking children thought provoking questions will prompt them to deepen their thinking and become more comfortable with using new words and expressive language. Classrooms that reflect a strong balance of teacher-child conversation create an environment that support vocabulary development.



Math

As children mature, they continue developing mathematical concepts. Long before they know what “5 + 5” means, they are forming ideas that will be the foundation for their future learning in math.

Children gradually develop an understanding of what numbers mean, how they are used, and how numbers relate to each other. Do not forget that these simple ideas are the groundwork for success in math. The following ideas can be implemented every day in your classroom. Once children grasp the simple concept, simply make the task more difficult the next time. By the end of the year, you will have a class of mathematicians ready for kindergarten.

Have children identify objects by size or position. Children can identify the larger of two groups of objects or the smaller of two groups of objects. Don’t forget to teach relevant math vocabulary: larger, smaller, over, under, etc.

One-to-One Correspondence

Use manipulatives to help children understand concepts. Many times we “think” children understand vocabulary or concepts; we

“know” they understand when they can “show” us.

Expose children to written numbers. Numbers are used in books, in our phone numbers, in identifying where we live. When you



“say” a number, “write” that same number. You will soon see children writing their own numbers.

Talk about math. “I have four blocks. If I take one away, how many will I have?” “You have five cubes. If I give you one more, how many will you have?”

Ordering: Put objects in a certain order, smallest to largest or largest to smallest

Creating patterns. Find and discuss patterns in the classroom, outside, etc.

Comparisons: Begin comparing items that are familiar with the children. Use words such as bigger, smaller, more than, lighter, etc.

Sorting: Classify objects by similar, obvious physical characteristics (size, color, height, length, or shape).

Remember math is fun!

You probably have the following games in your classroom. Use them to teach and reinforce math skills.

- ☐ *Bingo* for number recognition
- ☐ *Chutes and Ladders* for number recognition, counting, and concepts such as “before” and “after”
- ☐ *Candy Land* for matching
- ☐ *Don’t Break the Ice* for logical reasoning, making predictions, and cause & effect relationships
- ☐ *Mr./Mrs. Potato Head* for reinforcing part-to-whole relationships and one-to-one correspondence
- ☐ *Memory* for reinforcing matching and identifying sets

Great Gourds! It's Fall!

October presents a unique opportunity to explore the many bounties of fall. At this time of year gourds, pumpkins, and dried corn are easily accessible at any local grocery. Pick up a bag of gourds, a few ears of dried corn, or ask for donations from parents.

Introduce these wonderful finds into large or small group using appropriate vocabulary such as; gourds, fruit, kernels, feed corn, cob, husks, seeds, shell, skin, and shuck.

Set out magnifying glasses, scales, balances, measuring tape, bowls for sorting, laminated pictures of gourds and pumpkins, large tongs for carrying and moving, and don't forget the clipboard and crayons so the children can record their findings. This is also a great time to show the students how to remove corn kernels with tweezers; this can lead to math and language activities.

Discuss the uses of gourds today (birdhouses, home décor) and historically (ladles, bowls, household tools). Also, explain that gourds have been used throughout time as musical instruments. Check out this website for more on how to make your own musical instrument. Leave your gourds on the science table to naturally dry out ; within two months they will become shakers!

<http://suite101.com/article/how-to-make-gourd-musical-instruments-a100553>



Creating a Positive Climate in your CLASSroom

- Enjoy your time with the children – Create and share in fun, relaxing moments with children. During free time or while walking to lunch, take time to interact with children and enjoy being with them.
- Make learning fun – Look for opportunities to make daily learning activities fun for children. Think about the things that make children laugh and smile and find ways to integrate these into everyday activities.
- Show your enthusiasm – Let the children know that you enjoy your job and like spending time with them. If you are enthusiastic about classroom activities, the children will be as well.
- Make positive comments and communicate your warm feelings toward children – Look for opportunities to comment positively on children's efforts and participation.
- Engage in social conversation – Ask children questions about their lives outside of the classroom, then remember to ask about things that are important to them, such as family members or their outside activities.
- Be respectful and personal – Be respectful in interactions with children. Use their names when you talk and model the use of polite language such as please, thank you, and you're welcome.
- Facilitate positive peer interactions – Encourage children to engage in positive interactions with each other. Teach and model sharing, helping others, and being respectful, so that children can begin using these strategies in interactions with their peers.

Teacher to Teacher

What transition activity have you found to be effective during center time clean-up to ensure that all children are engaged in clean-up or academic activity?

I demo a few seconds of a special song *before* work time begins so that everyone has the tune in their heads. This piece is usually an action type song they know. As soon they hear the music, clean up begins. When their work area is clean, they join me or my para for some "party fun dancing" in the circle.

Sometimes we use musical power points via the Smart Board to groove to as a transitioning activity. This truly speeds up clean up and the cleanup crew (a classroom job) can quickly check out the work areas/centers for completion of clean-up.

Another big hit: on Friday or crazy days I play soft music, and we all pretend to be vacuum cleaner. We make a soft vacuum cleaner sound to clean up; they love to be Mr./Ms. vacuum cleaners with tape on their hands to "suck up the small pieces"...we turn the tape sticky side out to "suck up the stuff!"

JudyAnne T. Terry

During center time clean-up, we play a game to see which center can clean up the fastest. This encourages all students to participate. We use large sand timers (five minute timers) as visuals for children. The first center that gets through cleaning (with teacher confirmation) gets an award such as lining up first for outside time or stand and get a round of applause from their classmates, etc.

Rebecca Highsmith

The Shawn Brown transition CD is our FAVORITE! One teacher monitors and helps/encourages the

students with clean up while the other teacher is on the rug singing/dancing along with the students who are finished cleaning. The students love singing along and dancing while cleaning.

Rachel Styn

During the "quiet transitions" (story time to small group, etc.), I hold up a star which signals children to stop, take a breath, and relax. We then can move quietly and calmly to the next activity. I sometimes use a rain stick. The children love the calming sound. You can have a designated helper to hold the transition star/rain stick as a class job.

Tammie Peek

I assign "teams" to clean specific areas, challenging them to "Beat the Clock" (an electronic timer on the Smart Board). I award the winning team by taking their picture and posting it on our "Clean Team" board. The children like having a certain area assigned to them, the room gets cleaned up faster, and they love to see their team picture posted on the board. My goal early in the year is to "catch" every child successful in Beating the Clock so that all develop a sense of success, accomplishment, and community.

Dawn Woodard

I found that with my class, presenting clean-up as a challenge to see who could follow instruction, clean up well, and come to the carpet the quickest was best. We played "Beat the Music" where children would try to clean up and get to the carpet before the music ended. It was a challenge against the music rather than each other. Once the song ended, I would let those who set a good example for

their friends choose a movement song so the children would be engaged in music and dance while waiting for others to finish cleaning their areas.

Kimberly Ross

I announce, "In five minutes you get to do something new!" I set a timer which helps define the time to cleanup and get ready to progress to the next activity. When the timer goes off, everyone begins cleanup and when finished they freeze/raise their hands and respond. "I'm done!" In recognition of a job well done, I walk around and give high five's to each child.

Sherry Stone

I enjoy singing to my students during transition times. During clean-up I begin with the clean-up song and then start my own song such as *I am waiting, I am waiting on you* until all the children arrive in the circle. The children also enjoy *Look through the window, and who do you see?* (say child's name). This always draws them quickly to circle time. To line up, I use letters or colors; *If your name starts with J, line up. If you have on red, line up.* Music is magical, and always engages the children.

Gloria Jackson

Are You Listening (*Tune: Frere Jacques*)

Are you listening, Are you listening? Look at me, Look at me. If you are ready, if you are ready, to hear a story to hear a story. (I substitute: to clean up, line up, take a nap, etc.) As each area is completed, I walk to each center and brag on how well they cleaned the centers.

Maria McBride

WSO

Imagine going grocery shopping only once a week. Before going to the store, we would look to see what we have and make a list of what we need. Can you imagine not updating this list weekly but only every five to six weeks?

In the past many of us have been doing something very similar by rating children's checklists (in WSO) or spreadsheet (in WSS) only every five to six weeks. This year teachers are being asked to regularly update the checklists/spreadsheets when documentation has been collected. For example, if children draw a picture in small group of their favorite part of a story that has just been read to them, why wait five to six weeks to mark the relevant indicators. Teachers also find it less stressful

to update a little at a time rather than having to rate all the children at one time.

The biggest advantage is that the Class Profile (in WSO) or the spreadsheet (in WSS) becomes your shopping list! By looking at these documents, you can easily see what you have and what you need. This information then becomes an essential part of your lesson planning.

Happy Shopping!



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For updates from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/gadep-tearlycare or Facebook at www.facebook.com/brightfromthestart.



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

20-Year Celebration

This year Georgia's Pre-K Program will turn 20, and several events throughout the year have been planned to help celebrate this milestone. If you have been a part of this program or know someone who has been around since the beginning, we want to hear from you. Please e-mail your story and contact information to:

20yearsofprek@dec.al.ga.gov

